

VZCZCXYZ0016  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #0542 1032010  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 132010Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0398  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 2293  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6495  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8230  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3795  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1372  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 5149  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9705  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2474  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 2317  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000542

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [KHDP](#) [PE](#)  
SUBJECT: SHINING PATH ATTACK KILLS 13 IN THE VRAE

REF: LIMA 329

Classified By: DCM James Nealon for reasons 1.4b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Suspected Sendero Luminoso (SL) terrorists ambushed military patrols near Vizcatan in the VRAE April 9, killing 13 soldiers and injuring others. It was among the deadliest SL attacks of recent years, and reflects a continuing pattern of terrorist retaliation for ongoing military operations in the area (septel). End Summary.

¶2. (U) On Thursday morning, April 9th, Shining Path (SL) terrorists ambushed two military patrols in the Vizcatan region of the Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE) and killed thirteen soldiers. (Note: The VRAE is the base of operations for the most resilient faction of the remaining two armed SL factions operating in Peru. The second faction operates further north in the Upper Huallaga Valley. Septel. End Note.) The ambush occurred near the army base at Sanabamba, which the military established in September 2008 as part of its Operation Excellence action to take control of the SL's Vizcatan stronghold (ref A). Although government troops have faced deadly SL sniper fire since the beginning of this operation, the April 9 attack was by far the largest and deadliest in this period.

¶3. (U) SL launched the ambush by remotely detonating an improvised explosive device (IED) on the side of a hill in the path of two military patrols, which, according to press reports, were not following proper operational security precautions. After the explosion caused a rockslide that crushed some of the soldiers in the lead patrol, the SL column attacked the survivors with gunfire and grenades. Twelve of sixteen troops in the lead patrol died in the initial battle. The second patrol soon caught up and repelled the guerrillas, losing one soldier in the combat. There are reports of at least one soldier missing.

¶4. (U) In a press conference, Defense Minister Antero Flores-Araoz called the attacks a "cowardly" response to the progress that the military is making in Vizcatan against the Shining Path. He lamented that there will always be deaths in war, but vowed the GOP would continue the fight and would eventually win. Prime Minister Yehude Simon likewise called the ambush a "desperate response" to military operations in the zone.

Comment: Military in a Difficult Fight

-----  
¶5. (C) The military's efforts against the Shining Path in its

VRAE stronghold has made the troops vulnerable to attacks by narco-guerrilla forces that have thorough knowledge of the land and the ability to survive on the run. Given the military's expanded efforts in the VRAE, SL harassment and more small-scale attacks, as well as occasional large ambushes like April 9, are likely to continue. Military and Police officers we spoke with believe that SL is likely to continue using home made command-detonated IEDs made from dynamite and ANFO (ammonium nitrate fertilizer and kerosene) because they are cheap, easy to deploy, and hard to detect in the VRAE's jungle terrain.

MCKINLEY